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File Code: 3420 **Date:** November 3, 2005
Route To: (2400), (5100)

Subject: Proposed 2006 Pinaleño Ecosystem Management Restoration Project (saffordrd)

To: District Ranger, Safford RD

I met with Craig Wilcox, Silviculturist, and Lisa Angle, Forester, on October 19, 2005 to evaluate the proposed FY 2006 Pinaleño Ecosystem Management Restoration Project. Craig submitted the proposal to cover costs associated with precommercial thinning and slash treatment on 100 acres.

The proposed treatment area is part of the Districts 1,100 acre Pinaleño Ecosystem Management Analysis Area. During analysis, sites were selected along Highway 366 (Swift Trail) due to their proximity to critical habitat for the Mt. Graham Red Squirrel (MGRS) and Mexican Spotted Owl (MSO). Habitat losses for these two species have occurred over the past 10 years due to bark beetles, spruce aphid, spruce-fir looper, wildfire and severe drought.

This project area is located in mixed conifer stands on the southside of Webb Peak. Overstory vegetation is dominated by large, mature Douglas fir, ponderosa pine, and southwestern white pine. The understory is densely stocked with Engelmann spruce and corkbark fir. Pockets of aspen and alder are scattered throughout the area. Tree densities are in excess of 200 square feet of basal area per acre (BA). Douglas fir and spruce are infected with their respective dwarf mistletoes species; infection is scattered in low to high levels throughout the treatment area. The Clark Peak Fire burned through a section of this stand in 1996, leaving large standing snags and logs on the ground. Small pockets of trees have been killed bark beetles.

The project was established to reduce hazardous fuel loadings and improve tree vigor. The intent is to retain canopy cover, large snags and large logs, while reducing ladder fuels and ground fuels that contribute to catastrophic fire conditions. The prescription calls for thinning and removal of trees <9”dbh as well as reducing dead fuels. The latter will be covered with Hazardous Fuels funding. Dwarf mistletoe infected trees will be selected over uninfected trees. Slash will be piled and burned, with piles located more than 50 feet from any existing MGRS midden.

In addition to agreeing with the proposed prescriptions, our office recommends that slash be generated between late summer and the end of December, if possible. Slash piles should be placed in stand openings as much as possible and the largest diameter slash put on the outside of the pile to promote quick drying. Tepee style slash piles with branches and small-diameter slash in the middle and the larger diameter material on the outside.

If you have any questions regarding this evaluation, please let us know. I can be reached at (928) 556-2075 (mfairweather@fs.fed.us, Mary Lou).

/s/ Mary Lou Fairweather
MARY LOU FAIRWEATHER
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cc:
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